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IMB missionaries appointed in Kentucky

LEXINGTON, Ky. (BP) — Gesturing toward the Kentucky Wildcats' seven basketball national championship banners hanging in Rupp Arena, Jerry Rankin noted that the 67 new missionaries seated on the stage "are the champions of Southern Baptists."

"They are the ones who have been willing to focus on that purpose — to do whatever it takes to take the Gospel of Christ to a lost world," said Rankin, president of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) and a native Mississippian.

Rankin wasn't the only one comparing mission service to basketball during the Nov. 11 missionary appointment service held in conjunction with the Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting.

Coach Tubby Smith, who guided the Wildcats to their most recent championship in 1998, welcomed the crowd of 3,500 people to Lexington's Rupp Arena.

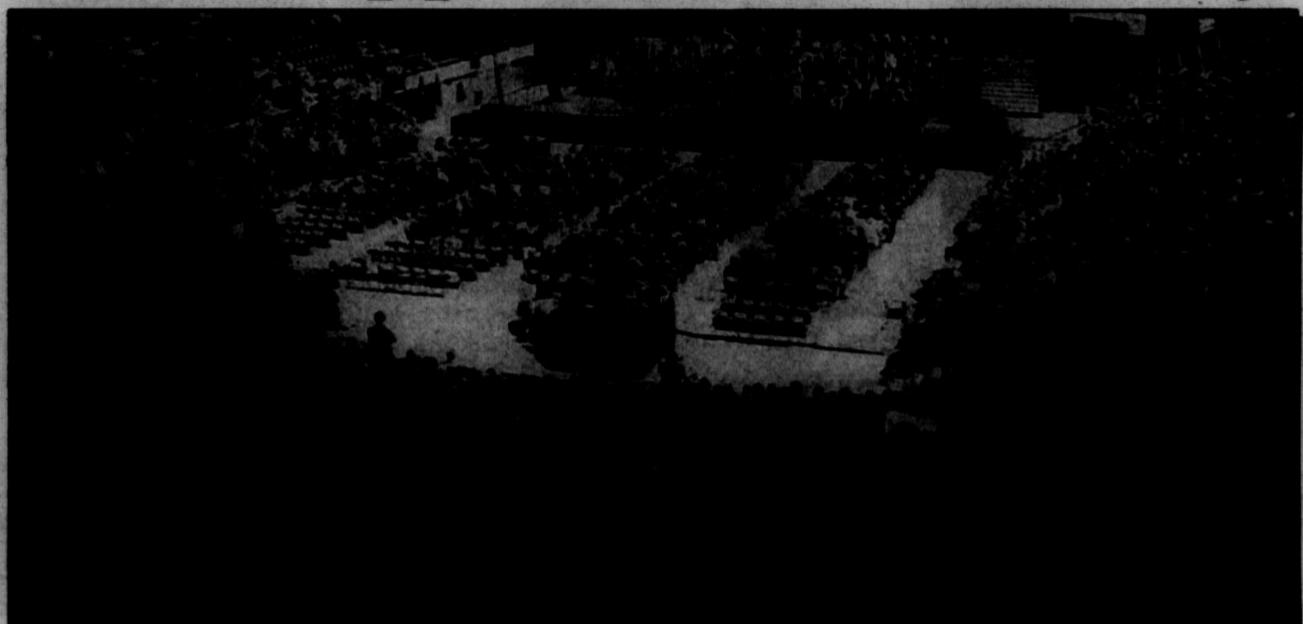
Comparing missions service to "making that pass to the open man or helping out on defense," Smith said, "That's what missionaries are doing; it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Urging the new missionaries to maintain their focus and integrity, he affirmed their efforts to "bring the Gospel to all parts of the world."

Noting that the missionaries "can't do it alone," Smith reminded the crowd, "You've got to have someone who supports you in everything you do. ... This is inspiring for me. We'll be praying. God bless you all."

In addition to the 67 missionaries who were being appointed, Rankin said there were two new missionaries in the audience "who are going to places so sensitive in a restrictive country that they cannot be identified publicly." The crowd responded by giving the anonymous missionaries a standing ovation.

During his challenge to the missionaries, Rankin said, "How impressive it is that these 67 are going in obedience to the command of our Lord to share



COMMISSIONING — More than 3,500 people gathered at Rupp Arena in Lexington, Ky., on Nov. 11 for the commissioning of 69 new missionaries with the International Mission Board IMB). As the banners of seven basketball national championships hung in the rafters, IMB President Jerry Rankin said the missionaries "are the champions of Southern Baptists." (BP photo by Allison Cox)

the Gospel of Christ. They have a unique calling and sense of God's leadership to the places they are called to serve."

Rankin asked, however, "What are 67 among so many? What are 67 among the multitudes and lost of the world who have never heard of Jesus?"

Citing Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:14 that "many are called, but few are chosen," he added, "It's obvious in the parable of the feast that those who were chosen are those who responded to the invitation."

The missionaries being commissioned "are the ones God has chosen to go out at this time," Rankin said.

Citing recent budget shortfalls that have led the IMB to put other appointments on hold, he added, "There are 100 others who would love to be sitting

where they are sitting. They're waiting for Southern Baptists to provide the support so they may join this host and go out and proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth."

Even amid financial limitations, "once again we must ask: 'Why so few among so many?'" Rankin reiterated. "Only a few are willing to lay their life on the altar and surrender to God's will."

Noting Isaiah's response to God's call, he said, "It was a generic call. He heard the voice of God saying, 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' He heard it as a call to his life and

his heart and he responded, 'Here am I, Lord; send me.'

"Why did Isaiah hear that heart cry of God when many of us have never heard that burden and cry of people who never knew that Jesus died for

them?" Rankin asked. "He saw God in all of His holiness. He recognized the Lordship of God and that He had every right and claim on his life.

"We'll never hear that call of God until we see God in all of His exaltation and sovereignty and Lordship," Rankin emphasized. "God doesn't call the worthy, the adequate, the equipped. He equips the called ones."

Missionaries appointed at the service with Mississippi connections include:

• Steven Dale Flippo, former minister of youth and education at Immanuel Church, Olive Branch. He will serve in university ministry in southern Africa. His wife, Cala Kimberly Flippo, will serve in community and home outreach.

• Kevin Darrell Shearer, a graduate of Baptist-affiliated William Carey College in Hattiesburg. He will serve as an evangelist/church planter in western South America. His wife, Pamela Michelle Shearer, will serve in community and home outreach. She is a graduate of Jones County Junior College in Ellisville and the University of Southern Mississippi.

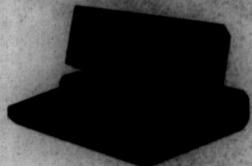
• Thomas Eugene Smith and his wife Sharlee of First Church, Long Beach. He will serve in university ministry in the middle Americas region, while she will serve in an evangelist/church planter role. Sharlee Smith is a graduate of William Carey College and also served the college as an assistant financial director.

COMING FORWARD — About 40 people gathered at the altar to pray about missions after International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin extended an invitation Nov. 11 at a missionary appointment service in Lexington, Ky. (BP photo by Bill Bangham)

That all people
everywhere
Follow God's Purpose

2003 LOTTIE MOON
CHRISTMAS OFFERING
SPECIAL PULL-OUT SECTION
PAGES 7-10

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For in those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit. — Judges 21:25 (NIV)

Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them. — Romans 1:32 (NIV)

Another brick was taken out of the wall that has guarded America's virtue for more than 200 years, when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled on November 18 that the state's constitution does not prohibit same-sex couples from enjoying all the privileges of marriage. The 4-3 decision was hailed by pro-homosexual activists who want to destroy all legal, philosophical, and spiritual distinctions between heterosexual and homosexual marriage, and panned by pro-family groups fighting to save what's left of America's ravaged moral landscape.

The Massachusetts decision comes on the heels of a November 7 veto by Wisconsin Democratic Governor Jim Doyle of a bill passed overwhelmingly by that state's legislators that would have defined marriage as being solely between a man and a woman. Of course, just about everyone in the country is familiar with the Episcopal consecration earlier this year of a proud, practicing homosexual as Bishop of New Hampshire.

Although Wisconsin would have been the 38th state to enact some sort of "defense of marriage" statute (Mississippi already being among those states), there is no guarantee that those laws will hold up to the legal challenge that is certain to come.

The homosexual rights movement has announced that it plans to challenge those state laws as a violation of Article IV of the U.S. Constitution which states, "Full faith and credit shall be given in each State to the public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of every other state." (Section 1), and "The citizens of each state shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states." (Section 2).

Just the beginning

In other words, a homosexual couple married in Massachusetts may soon be able to move to Mississippi with the expectation that they will receive all the legal rights and civil considerations given every married heterosexual couple already residing in the state. The Founding Fathers surely could not have foreseen such a sad perversion of their ideals.

As Massachusetts Chief Justice Margaret Marshall wrote in the majority opinion, marriage in America is an "evolving paradigm." As the Bible states about another God-blessed nation of long ago, without a king everyone did as they saw fit — and America has done everything it can to banish the King.

Don't think for a minute that the revolution ends here, or that the revolutionaries will be satisfied for long. A group called the North American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) advocates the legalization of sex between adult men and young boys. Their official slogan is, "Sex before eight or it's too late." In light of this court ruling, nothing can stop these pedophiles from filing lawsuits for the "next civil rights movement" — legalized sex and marriage between adults and children.

For those who believe that's just too preposterous, consider this. For several years now NAMBLA has been permitted to publicly march as a recognized group in the annual St. Patrick's Day parade in Boston, proudly displaying banners that proclaim their rights to deflower children. Does anyone recall the early days of the homosexual rights movement, when they were permitted to openly proclaim their message in such parades? Look at where we are now.

"REMEMBER TIM AND LAUREN—EVEN IF YOUR MARRIAGE IS MADE IN HEAVEN, THE MAINTENANCE WORK IS DONE HERE ON EARTH."



America is indeed a sick nation. Not only do we wink at such sin with full knowledge of the consequences, we defend and encourage the sinners through the actions of our courts, our news/entertainment industry, and even some of our churches.

A talk radio pundit recently made the point that our grandchildren's generation will have a completely different view of marriage than we have today; they will essentially and legally see marriage as a moving target, defined any way the individuals of each generation see fit to do so.

Even that will not be enough for the soldiers of this new revolution. God save us from ourselves — and soon, please.

GUEST OPINION:

Following Abraham

*By Jerry Rankin, president
International Mission Board*

not known. How do we explain it in our own country?

I really don't have answers for these disturbing questions, but Scripture has given me some insight. The Israelites became God's chosen people, not because they deserved His favor, but because He wanted them to be a priestly nation for the sake of others. He blessed them, not for their benefit, but to follow and fulfill His purpose.

It began with Abraham, who was called and blessed that, "all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 12:3, NKJV). God explained in Isaiah 49:6 (NASB) that His people were to be "a light of the nations so that

My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

When Jesus gave the Great Commission to His followers, He was simply clarifying God's purpose that they make disciples of all nations. But did they get it? Did they carry the Gospel to Judea, Samaria and the uttermost ends of the earth? No, they stayed in Jerusalem until God allowed persecution to disperse them according to His purpose (Acts 8:1).

Throughout the Old Testament we read that God allowed Israel to be conquered and punished by pagan tribes, usually because they forsook God to worship

other gods. But wasn't this also because they refused to fulfill God's purpose of glorifying Him among the nations?

Paul says in Romans that the hearts of the Jews had become hardened and they were rejected "until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in" (Rom. 11:25, NKJV). Can it be that God will withhold His blessings and anointing until we regain a vision for our purpose as His people? Churches that have a heart for the nations and give a high priority to missions seem to be the ones God blesses. Must God allow our nation to suffer and our churches to founder before we look beyond our own programs and interests to our larger mission task?

If all the peoples of the world are to know Him, it is up to us, Abraham's spiritual children. May we not follow Israel's example, but obey and follow God's purpose.

Rankin is a native Mississippian and member of the Hall of Fame at his alma mater, Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton.

Moore: 'We have what world is looking for'

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Lost souls are searching desperately for meaning and purpose in life, and though reaching out to them is exhausting, being part of God's mission in the world is worth it, Beth Moore recently told employees of the International Mission Board (IMB).

Moore, a noted speaker and Bible study author, told the mission workers they are pouring out their lives for the most important cause in the world.

"I cannot think of anybody doing anything on the face of this earth... that matters more than what you pour your lifeblood into," she said. "We may be tired at times. It almost seems unbearable, but we have what the world is looking for."

"They feel purposeless. They don't have anything that would be worth dying for — and therefore worth living for," she said. "That we would pour our lives out for somebody else to know Him and to love Him, that is everything."

"I would rather be right here in the heat of battle and live the great adventure than be out there in the safety zone of mediocrity," she said. "I want to be in the thick of it."

A member of First Church in Houston, Texas, and founder of Living Proof Ministries, Moore's personal mission includes ministering to missionary women overseas and challenging young people.

When Southern Baptist missionary work is at a critical point — with more qualified missionary candidates than funds available to send them — Moore said God had given



REACH OUT — Author and lecturer Beth Moore, speaking recently at the International Mission Board in Richmond, Va., urged board employees to continue the "exhausting" campaign to win the world to Christ. (BP photo by Bill Bangham)

her a special word to share with IMB staff members.

"It's going better than you think. It's going well. The Spirit is doing what He came to do," she said. "And praise God that all our problems, all our shortcomings, all our lack of resources are not holding Him up. He just wants us to have the joy of being in on it."

She challenged the mission workers, and all Southern Baptists, to take hold of biblical faith. "Missionaries practice more faith [than most evangelicals] because they have to," she said. "They don't get to think the safest thoughts because they can't afford to. They are desperate for God to work."

Evangelicals in the United States, however, have

allowed others to keep them from practicing biblical faith, Moore said.

"As evangelicals, we are in a crisis of unbelief. We need a revival of biblical faith," she said. "We've got to be people of God's Word. Believe what He says. Stop arguing [about] things of faith and just believe."

That, Moore said, sometimes means believing God for what seems impossible — like a 33% increase in this year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering so the board can send all the missionaries God is calling out.

When Scripture says "everything is possible for him who believes," it uses a verb tense meaning "caught in the present act of believing God," Moore noted. "You've got an unreasonable goal for the offering this Christmas, but we believe Him for the unreasonable."

God has given each believer a race to run, and the question is whether each one keeps running until it is finished, Moore said.

When the devil tries to discourage Christians off the path of faith, they must be people of God's Word who believe what He says and practice it, Moore declared.

Toward that end, she encouraged the mission

workers to recite a "pledge of faith" she uses daily, counting each point off on the fingers of her right hand:

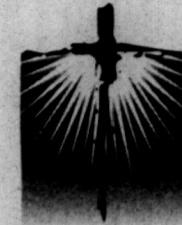
"God is who He says He is. God can do what He says He can do. I am who God says I am. I can do all things through Christ. God's Word is alive and active in me."

"I want to go out believing God," she said. "At any point in my life, caught in the act of believing Him."

Audio excerpts from Beth Moore's message to IMB staffers can be downloaded in the following ways:

JUST AN OVERGROWN GA

- Low-speed connection http://rodan.implex.net/allied-vaughn/IMB/bethmoore/GA_low.wma
- High-speed connection http://rodan.implex.net/allied-vaughn/IMB/bethmoore/GA_high.wma



MISSISSIPPI
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THE
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The Baptist Record

IT IS WORTH IT ALL

- Low-speed connection http://rodan.implex.net/allied-vaughn/IMB/bethmoore/poured_out_low.wma
- High-speed connection http://rodan.implex.net/allied-vaughn/IMB/bethmoore/poured_out_high.wma

WE HAVE A DECISION TO MAKE

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- High-speed connection http://rodan.implex.net/allied-vaughn/IMB/bethmoore/ime_high.wma

For Beth Moore's Living Proof Ministries, go to www.lproof.org.

Looking back

10 years ago

The student council of Wingfield High School in Jackson votes 490-96 for student-led prayer, with 413 abstaining. Principal Bishop Knox is put on indefinite administrative leave. Mississippi Baptist Convention messengers approve of the voluntary prayer and commend the students and principal.

20 years ago

Laurel attorney Charles Pickering, former state senator from 1972-80, and a deacon and Sunday School teacher at First Church, Laurel, is elected as the first layman president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention in 11 years.

30 years ago

Mississippi Baptists close their 118th annual convention, changing the Woman's College in Hattiesburg to a co-educational school, authorizing the Jackson Baptist Hospital board of trustees to erect a six- to 10-story medical arts building, and adopting a \$1.5 million Cooperative Program goal.

Witnesses: Saudis exporting violent Islam

WASHINGTON (BP) — Saudi Arabia exports an intolerant, violence-producing form of Islam to other countries, including the United States, witnesses told the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).

The royal family that rules Saudi Arabia is wedded to an extremist strain of Islam known as Wahhabism that controls the

works in London as an expert on her native country. "Saudi Arabia is guilty of propagating intolerance" globally, she said.

The testimony of Yamani and three American specialists on Saudi Arabia came before a panel that consistently has expressed concern about the lack of religious liberty in that country, as well as the U.S. government's failure to take action.

For the last four years, the USCIRF has recommended the State Department add Saudi Arabia to its list of "countries of particular concern (CPC)," but the department has refused to do so, even while acknowledging religious freedom does not exist in the country. CPC designation is reserved for severe violators of religious liberty.

The commission also has proposed a congressionally funded study to determine if Saudi Arabia is directly or indirectly funding the spread of Wahhabism to other countries.

The Nov. 18 testimony probably will only reinforce the USCIRF's position on Saudi Arabia.

The witnesses testified "there is no meaningful distinction between the Saudi government and the Saudi religious establishment," said Richard Land, a USCIRF commissioner and the head of the Southern Baptist Convention's religious liberty entity. "It is clear the Saudis have been quite complicit in seeking to export through the use of their vast oil wealth a uniquely radical and narrow interpretation of Islam known as Wahhabism.

"It is also clear there are many things our government should do and can do to encourage and pressure the Saudi government to make reforms to begin the process of Saudi society becoming a much more modern society," said Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "This would give at least religious toleration if not full religious freedom to a country that currently has no religious freedom. No meaningful improvement in the situation in Saudi Arabia will take place

without continued and strong pressure from the government of the United States."

The United States, however, "struck a Faustian bargain" with Saudi Arabia because of its reliance on oil from that country, said Martin Indyk, a Middle East expert and former ambassador to Israel.

As a result, Indyk told the USCIRF, the U.S. government ignored the Saudis' domestic policies, as well as their pattern of buying off extremists and of propagating hate internationally.

This spreading of hate is happening in schools "in the United States as well," Indyk said. "We should not be surprised by that."

This intolerance leads to worse consequences, said David Aufhauser, who was, until recently, the chairman of the National Security Council's policy coordinating committee on terrorist financing.

"[M]ere children are becoming weapons charged with religious fervor and hate made sweet by promises of some heavenly redemption," he testified. "[Intolerance] has become a foundation for killing."

Some of the witnesses said the curriculum in the schools and the Islamic charities that fund intolerance must be targeted in order to solve the problem.

"Measures should be taken now and can be taken now which are consistent, which do not challenge, which are not at war with their faith, if their faith is what they say it is," Aufhauser said.

The "rivers of money" do not flow through the Saudi government but through charities or Wahhabi clerics, Aufhauser said. The money flow happens, however, with the knowledge of the Saudi government, he said.

Saudi Arabia has taken some important steps, Aufhauser said, including enacting a new law that requires the registration and auditing of charities, shutting off 10 foreign branches of the largest charity, instituting a process of "vetting" domestic clerics and, based on the statement of a high Saudi official, removing hundreds of extremist clerics.

The USCIRF's May 2003 report on Saudi Arabia may be accessed online at www.uscirf.gov.



INTOLERANCE DETAILED

— Mai Yamani, a Saudi national now based in London, describing her native country as "propagating intolerance" worldwide, told a Nov. 18 meeting of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, "Not only has the state embraced the hard-liners, the hard-liners are the state." (BP photo by Tom Strode)

leaders of the country's 71,000 mosques, as well as the educational system, the panel was told. Despite a recent denial by the Saudi government, this form of Islam is being exported to schools in other countries with Saudi funds, the witnesses said.

"Not only has the state embraced the hard-liners, the hard-liners are the state," said Mai Yamani, a Saudi national who

Saudi government to make reforms to begin the process of Saudi society becoming a much more modern society," said Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "This would give at least religious toleration if not full religious freedom to a country that currently has no religious freedom. No meaningful improvement in the situation in Saudi Arabia will take place

Documentary: children recruited for holy war

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Extremist Islamic camps in the Middle East train more than 10,000 Arab children each year how to commit suicide bombings, perpetuate other acts of violence, and develop hatred toward Jews, according to *The New Barbarians*, a documentary produced by filmmaker, Cary Matrisciana, who is a Southern Baptist.

Samuel Shahid, who teaches Islamic studies at Southwestern Seminary in Fort Worth, warns though, that only a small percentage of Muslims engage in violence toward Jews. In fact, videos like *The New Barbarians* may cause viewers to inappropriately caricature all Muslims as violent, Shahid said.

Any church or individual that chooses to show *The New Barbarians*, added Shahid, must tell viewers that the majority of Muslims in the Middle East seek a peaceful resolution to conflict with the Jewish people.

The documentary, released earlier this year, also contends that a significant number of the 1.6 million Muslims in the

United States financially support the Middle Eastern camps.

Matrisciana, who has more than 20 years experience as a filmmaker, produced *The New Barbarians* by compiling footage from Arab television, news reports and other documentaries. This footage shows the graphic aftermath of terrorist bombings and details how Islamic camps are training Arab children as young as five years old to use machine guns, slit human throats, hijack cars, and strap explosives to themselves, Matrisciana told Baptist Press.

In one scene, an Arab reporter asks a five-year-old Muslim boy, "Do you want to be a martyr?" The boy answers affirmatively. "Why?" probes the reporter. "To kill the Jews," the boy replies.

Another scene features an Islamic leader exhorting a Middle Eastern congregation to kill Jews and all who support them. "Amongst them [the Jews] there are no moderates nor peace partisans," says the Islamic leader. "They are all liars. They must be massacred. They must be killed. Allah the

Almighty said: fight them. Have no pity for them, wherever they are, in whatever country. Fight them wherever you are. Wherever you meet them, kill them! Wherever you are, kill these Jews and the Americans who are like them and support them. They fight together against Arabs and Muslims."

Such hatred is not limited to the Middle East, according to the documentary. Though violent training seems to be confined to the Middle East, there are Islamic camps in the United States that teach American children to hate Jews, Matrisciana said.

"I'm not saying that type of [violent] training is taking place in America, but there certainly are camps that are training young American Muslims in this country to hate Jews, incite hatred of Jews.... And in some of the meetings in the various different American states, you see the people carrying their own guns and saying that we need to spill the blood of Jews. In fact, one little kid, an American child, American Muslim in America went up to

the camera of this training camp and said, 'Butcher the Jews,'" Matrisciana said.

Another alarming problem in the United States, according to Matrisciana, is that a significant number of American mosques financially support organizations that carry out violence against Middle Eastern Jews.

"The mosques raise money, and many times through questionable charities, raise money for the Middle East where young children, where young Arab children are being trained to be human bombs," she said.

Many of the Muslims in the United States "are being taught in their mosques to be politically active to support the aggressive jihad movement. And jihad, of course, is holy war, which means that you kill the infidels or non-believers or even moderate Muslims...."

Shahid noted, however, that the majority of Muslims do not advocate violence. Only a small group of radicals advocate the behavior depicted in *The New Barbarians*, he said.



JUST FOR THE RECORD

The 1st-3rd grade GAs of First Church, Quitman, celebrated GAs 90th birthday with a birthday cake and ice cream. Pictured (from left, top) are Hannah Hampton, Mallory Slay, Taylor White, Ashton Howell, (bottom) Mary Katherine Martin, Whitney Neely, Ashley Holloman, and Densiley Bailey.

The RAs and GAs of First Church, Quitman, raised \$788 for World Hunger Relief in their Bike-A-Thon. The RA and GA riders are Ryan Evans, Charlie Sorto, Dillon Slay,



1st - 3rd grade GAs of First Church, Quitman

The Women on Mission of Pleasant Hill Church, Calhoun City, recently participated in Operation Christmas Child. The Mission Friends, GAs, RAs, and Youth on Mission, are asked to fill a shoe box. Then the WOM adds toothpaste, a brush, and soap. Eight boxes were filled to send to church family members in Iraq as well.

Twin Lakes Church, Madison, celebrated Christmas in August and presented Son Valley Home Builders, Inc. with a generous check. Pictured (from left) are Bill McCormack, director of Son Valley, Hugh Smith, pastor at Twin Lakes, and Billy Therrell, Son Valley.



RAs & GAs of First Church, Quitman

Whitney Neely, Ethan Howell, Mallory Slay, Ashley Holloman, Ryan Parkerson, Ashton Howell, Philip Martin, Melanie Holloman, Colby Evans, Heather Rozar, Deacon Lewis, John Mark Harris, Noah Bailey, and Jakeb Bailey.

Fernwood Church, Gulfport, will hold a Lottie Moon Bake/Yard Sale December 6 at 8 a.m. in the church parking lot. The Children's Christmas Play will be December 7 at 6 p.m. and the Christmas Musical, His Kingdom Shall Never End, will be December 14 at 6 p.m.

Walker Hill Church, Brandon, will present a Live Nativity Scene December 13 at 7 p.m. and December 14 at 8:30 p.m. For more information, call (601) 825-6210. Ronald Purser is pastor.

Oakland Grove Church, Laurel, will present Steve Walker, music evangelist, Pinola, in concert November 30 at 11 a.m. Macdon Phillips, pastor, invites all to attend. A love offering will be received.

Mt. Horeb Church, Collins, will present Steve Walker, music evangelist from Pinola, in concert November 30 at 6 p.m. John Reid, pastor, invites the public. A love offering will be received. For more information, call (601) 847-4375.

Lakeshore Church, Jackson, will hold their annual Live Drive-Thru Nativity December 18, 19, and 20. All are welcome.

The Kingdom Karacters and The Griffith Singing Christmas Tree of Griffith Memorial Church, Jackson, will present The Story of Christmas December 5-7 at 6:30 p.m. The program

includes a puppet drama and musical. Admission is free. Contact (601) 372-7812 for free tickets.



Bill McCormack, Hugh Smith, and Billy Therrell



Women on Mission of Pleasant Hill Church, Calhoun City

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MBF

THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST FOUNDATION

SPECIAL EDITION

THE BAPTIST

Record

JOURNAL OF THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST CONVENTION

Chinese Christians weep for lost city

Sheer hills rise around a quiet Chinese town, framing the idyllic setting like a Chinese alpine village. Often overlooked in a province known more for ethnic minority groups, the city of nearly 500,000 is often just a bus stop on a frequently traveled commercial route.

There is a park with a relaxed, festive ambience for strolling couples and groups of older women practicing aerobic dance at twilight. On sunny afternoons, men fly kites — pinpoints of color against the steep foothills of southern China.

It was to the top of one of these surrounding mountains that Barnabas (not his real name), a Baptist worker, once brought four natives of the city — Christians he had met. Together, they looked out over the city.

Barnabas describes the city like many other Chinese cities, in the sense that "it has existed within a spiritual vacuum for so long," the result of a government preaching atheism to two generations of people. A Buddhist temple and a Taoist monastery stand, "but nobody is believing in anything," Barnabas says. Religion exists only in form, almost nonexistent.

"As we looked over the city," he says, "we asked them how many believers there were." The Chinese answered that there had been 1,000 believers, but about 700 of them "are with the Lord now." Only 300 remain.

"Then I asked them: 'How do you think God feels about only 300 believers out of 500,000 people?' They dropped to their knees and began to weep," Barnabas recalls. "I didn't need to ask them how they felt about it — it was obvious by their weeping."

Barnabas knelt and together with his Chinese friends wept for the city. "Our tears were like a prayer," he says. "This was our beginning."

Shortly after this experience, the Gospel began moving in the quiet town — reaching into hearts that had been waiting to hear the truth. As someone looking in from the outside and praying for a movement of God in the city, Barnabas' enthusiasm is barely contained.

"People are believing the Gospel almost instantly — as soon as they hear it!" he says. "One lady, as soon as she watched the Jesus film, believed in the Lord and started sharing with her family and friends."

"Another man believed and was delivered from alcoholism. It wasn't like in Western society where [many people] add religion as another component of life — accepting Christ became a whole new life for him, his reason for being."

This particular man "heard the Gospel from another new believer, who had heard from someone else, who had heard it from [a visitor to the city]. It's a chain reaction,"



OFF TO WORK — On the outskirts of town, peasants and factory workers walk to their employment. A Baptist worker there believes that if new Christians feel a burden for their city's lostness, God will use that to spread the Gospel throughout the province. (IMB photo)

Barnabas says. "It's like the New Testament; they don't have to be told to share — they just want to."

Barnabas and the Chinese Christians in the city know, however, that much more needs to be done, particularly in getting the Gospel further into the city's growing business center. Through creative seed-sowing methods, dozens of business owners have read Christian materials and many have been looking for more.

Through self-initiative and curiosity, one particular business that came to have the Gospel "began studying the Gospel of Luke every morning two weeks before anyone ever came to talk with them. They were ready to believe and be trained. God is doing this work," Barnabas says.

Zhou (not his real name), who owns several restaurants, enjoys flying kites in the late afternoon. After dark, once the dinner crowd has moved on and the short, greasy tables are wiped clean, Zhou's extended family gathers in their restaurant by the lake and eats their own evening meal.

In the warm restaurant, the family makes small talk and quick work of plates of vegetables, fried chicken parts, and pickled meats. Zhou and his brothers use the arrival of a visitor to toast with cups of homemade liquor.

A bucket-sized bowl of broth is brought out and, with chopsticks, Zhou deftly flips rice noodles, raw eggs, uncooked bacon, chicken, and onions into the bowl.

"Only in [this town] will you find noodles like this," Zhou's wife says proudly. Like most of the city's residents, the family has never left, nor do they want to. "People are happy here. No one leaves and we don't need to," Zhou says.

Barnabas is confident that it is within God's plan for people like Zhou and his

family to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This will happen as the numbers of believers and house churches "grow to the point of reproducing and training their own leaders. This will be a self-sustaining movement within the house churches," he says.

The people of this once-forgotten city will be reached as local Christians grow to love the Lord and desire the city to come to Him, he adds. A widespread church-planting movement lies first in the mountaintop experience Barnabas shared with his Chinese spiritual brothers as they wept, broken for the city.

"I think if we can stir — even within brand-new believers — a deep burden for the lostness of this city," he says, "God will use that burden to motivate the [Chinese believers] to share the Gospel with everyone, and, ultimately, to other parts of this province, China, and even to other parts of the world."

Christians can pray for this effort to introduce the Gospel by praying:

- For new believers and their continued boldness, as many Chinese believers consider it an honor to share in Christ's suffering.
- That the Gospel will penetrate every segment of society. Many parts of this city are completely untouched by any Christian witness. Pray that Communist Party members, government leadership, hospital workers, and all levels of business leaders will hear the Gospel.

• For indigenous churches to be born that will rapidly reproduce and reach the people of the city, and that these churches will have a vision to share the Gospel beyond the city.

• For people who distribute literature and Gospel packets, as well as individuals and teams to prayerwalk the city.

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SPECIAL INSERT

2003 LOTTIE MOON
CHRISTMAS OFFERING FOR
INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

That all peoples
may know Him
Follow God's Purpose

Week of Prayer for
International
Missions
and
International
Mission Study
Nov. 30-Dec. 7, 2003

Lottie Moon
Christmas Offering •
National Goal:
\$133 million
Challenge Goal:
\$150 million

Persecution a hard blow for missionaries



Lottie offering kicks off '03 campaign

During the 2003 International Missions Emphasis on Nov. 30 - Dec. 7, Southern Baptists will focus on God's intention that every people group hear the good news of His love and salvation in Jesus Christ. This year's theme — "That All Peoples May Know Him: Follow God's Purpose" — emphasizes God's people aligning their lives with God's redemptive mission in the world.

The national goal for this year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® for International Missions is \$133 million, with a challenge goal of \$150 million. Every penny will go to send missionaries and support their ministries, while gifts to the Cooperative Program will be used for administrative expenses and other items. The International Mission Board relies on the Lottie Moon offering for 50% of its annual income.

As the hymn fades, Mike Loftice stands to start the sermon. The congregation listens intently. In this church of five, it's best not to drift off to "lala land" — it might mean extra chores, warns one member.

"Dad's always asking questions to make sure we are listening," 11-year-old Brian explains. "So, make sure that you pay attention." Older brother Paul pipes in that the singing alone is enough to keep most people awake. "Dad's the only one of us who can sing; the rest of us just croak," the 17-year-old teases as his sister Ellen whacks his arm. "Oh come on — like you can sing!" she interjects.

Sitting in the corner, Susan watches her children's horseplay. With her 19-year-old daughter at college in the United States and Paul attending boarding school, it's been a year since everyone has been together.

She'll replay this scene in her mind another day — a day that isn't quite as happy. Like the day someone left a dead, bleeding chicken on their doorstep as a symbol they were not wanted and were cursed. Or the day she went to the electric company to see why the power had been off for days and workers replied, "We don't need a church here — now leave."

Seven years ago the Loftices moved to Niger, a country mostly made up of the Sahara Desert. They minister to one of the largest unreached people groups in West Africa, the Hausa (HOW-suh).

In order to reach the Hausa, the Loftices have lived in villages without electricity and running water. Now, they live in the Taj Mahal, as they call it. They have water and electricity most days. With modern technology, the family watches satellite television. They have freezers to store up to three months of supplies they bring in from Niamey, a 10-hour drive.



SPECIAL SERVICE — On Sunday afternoons, the Loftices gather at home for a church service. Susan plays the electric piano while the others take turns choosing what songs to sing from *The Baptist Hymnal*. After singing, Mike sits on the piano bench and teaches a lesson from the Bible. (IMB photo)

"No matter if you live with or without conveniences, the hardest part is still the isolation from like-minded people," Susan admits. "When you don't have contact with other Christians it makes it really hard."

Mike nods in agreement. Often the family feels like they are in the middle of Satan's playground, he says. They feel the weight of evil all around. For years, the family has shared the Gospel and been rejected time after time.

One time Mike shared with a Muslim holy man. That day the imam knew the truth of Jesus Christ but as his eyes welled up with tears, he looked at Mike and said, "There is no other god but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet." Then the imam got up and walked away.

Experiences like this happen almost daily. "It's not only how much of our lives are being spent on these people that's hard," Mike says through tears, "but to see what it's done to my family and have no results that we can see... I mean, look what the children have given up and their persecution."

Brian experiences more physical persecution than other family members. Around Muslim holidays, he doesn't even bother to step outside the house. He knows that because he is a Christian, he is not wanted.

"The older guys don't like Christians. They always throw rocks and stuff at me," he says. "My best friend and I just play in our yard — no big deal."

Life in Niger has been the hardest on Ellen. Girls are not

only married by the time they are 12 years old, but they also have a ton of work and no time to play. Raising a daughter in a Muslim culture means watching out for leering men and guarding against marriage proposals.

Isolation does have its upside. The family spends hours playing games and just talking, creating a closeness they feel never would have happened if they lived elsewhere.

New Christians are often persecuted. Mike explains that while his family suffers from a general nonacceptance and isolation, the Hausa Christians are left to survive on their own.

"No matter how hard it is, we know that if we leave now, they won't hear," Mike and Susan say. "We stay because God called us to this work."

Working with 220M lost souls 'overwhelming'

Calvin Walters (not his real name) arrived in Southeast Asia with a vision for reaching Muslims for Christ. Where to start? Indonesia's nearly 220 million people make up the largest Muslim nation in the world. They inhabit 4,000 of the 17,000 islands of the Indonesian archipelago stretching 4,000 miles across the Indian Ocean.

"There are only so many things you can get your mind around," Walters says. "I thought Indonesia was made up of Indonesians. Trying to think of evangelizing 220 million people — that's overwhelming."

"I quickly learned of the spectrum of the country," he says. "There are different people groups with different values and beliefs. You can't learn about 'Indonesian' culture. What slice do you want to look at? As we learned and became more aware of unreached people groups, we knew we had to be among a group."

Simply put, Walters recognized what missions strategists had discovered: appearances can be deceiving.

"People groups" as used by the International mission Board refers to

groups of individuals, families and clans who share a common language and ethnic identity. An unreached people group (UPG), says Scott Holste, director of the IMB's global research department, is a "people group in which the number of evangelical Christians totals less than two percent of the population."

At first glance, the numbers are daunting: nearly 6,500 unreached people groups in the world today, with a combined population of approximately 3.4 billion.

Today, approximately one-third of personnel with the IMB are engaging "Last Frontier" people groups — unreached people groups with little or no access to the Gospel, and ones that have had no evangelical church-starts in the past two years.

Walters realized a greater Kingdom impact could be made if he were to focus on an unreached people group that had no evangelical witness.

If Sumatra, the largest unevangelized island on earth, were a nation, writes Patrick Johnstone in *Operation World*, only nine other nations would have more unreached peoples. Sumatra is the home of 52 known

unreached people groups consisting of 25 million people. Of the 52 groups, 48 of them have no indigenous churches and 34 of them have no known Gospel workers.

"There was a time when we could mark initial progress in this task [of world evangelism] by keeping track of and learning about the countries in which we had missionaries," says Holste.

"We have learned, however, that reality is much more complex than that," he says. "Virtually every country in the world contains scores, if not hundreds, of diverse people groups. We can no longer be satisfied that we have made disciples and established the church in one or two people groups in a country."

For several years, IMB leadership has reiterated that the organization exists to serve as a launching pad for the church to be involved in reaching the world.

"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to ends of the earth" *Isaiah 49:6 (NIV)*.

Christian sacrifices life to spread Gospel

Abdul (not his real name) stumbled sadly along the side of a road in south Asia. His country of origin remains unidentified in order to protect the Christians there.

Rejected by his family and his community, the young man walked alone in the world, facing the threat of death for questioning the Islamic teachings forced upon him as a young child.

"Hey brother," someone yelled, "do you want to get up in this rickshaw and ride with me?" The invitation startled Abdul. He looked up and nearly went into shock: The words came from the mouth of a white man. He had never seen one in the area before. This one, speaking the local language fluently, was offering Abdul — an outcast — a ride on a hot day. During their journey, Abdul touched the stranger's arm to see if he were man or angel. "I was totally amazed," Abdul recalled years later. "Not many people were allowed to talk with me because I was shunned and seen as a Muslim sinner boy."

It was a turning point for Abdul — and would become a turning point for his people. The white man was a Southern Baptist missionary, and he gave Abdul a New Testament. Back home, Abdul opened it to the Gospel of John. He discovered a God who did not condemn him, but displayed mercy and love through Jesus Christ. He embraced God's saving grace that very night. His terrible loneliness was gone at last.

The isolation had begun years before. Abdul, like most boys in his village, was required to study the Quran in a local Muslim school. An earnest seeker, he questioned the holy book's teachings. First he was beaten and warned, then expelled and sent home in disgrace when his questions persisted.

His furious father banished him to a shack behind the family home, where he

lived in solitary misery for three years. His mother slid meals through a hole in the door. Twice he attempted suicide by drinking poison. "Freed" at age 13, he continued to be shunned by the community.

After meeting Christ in 1983, Abdul used his tiny shack to study Scripture in secret. The missionary and a local pastor quietly discipled him. When his father and uncles discovered Abdul's new faith, savage beatings followed. He refused to renounce his faith in Christ or burn his Bible, so they tied him to a stake in the family courtyard to stay until he changed his mind.

His mother quietly untied him and helped him escape to the capital city. Abdul never saw her alive again; she was physically abused for "shaming" the family and later died.

After baptism and studying in the capital with the missionary's help, Abdul returned to his home village, only to endure more abuse. An old classmate named Rafik took pity on his sufferings and nursed his wounds. Abdul led Rafik to Christ and baptized him.

"Yesterday, I was one," Abdul told Rafik. "Today, we are two. Tomorrow, we could be 200." Abdul's father was next. He sent word for Abdul to visit him when he became seriously ill. Abdul sat beside his father's bed and prayed each night until he was healed. Fully recovered, his father received Jesus as his Savior and was baptized by Abdul.

Meanwhile, a relative of Rafik was sent to persuade him to return to Islam. Rafik journeyed to the relative's village. When he came back, he told Abdul he had baptized seven families — a total of 36 people. The excited duo started sharing the Gospel of grace everywhere, beginning with their families and friends.



Rafik's bamboo house became the hub of the rapidly widening wheel as the 1990s waned. New believers from surrounding villages came there to receive 15 days of discipleship training and then went out to start churches. Late one night, Rafik answered a knock on his door. A group of fundamentalist Muslims rushed in and stabbed him to death.

Undeterred, Abdul bravely continues to lead the movement. By mid-2002, a church-planting movement of "historic size, scope and spiritual depth among Muslims" had emerged from these humble beginnings, according to an International Mission Board field assessment team. It is growing "amidst significant and escalating persecution."

The team found more than 350 evangelists serving in 29 districts, nearly 2,300 pastors serving among some 4,000 churches, and 89,315 baptized members — all direct spiritual descendants of Abdul.

QUIET WITNESS — In many areas of the world, Christians must avoid calling attention to themselves to avoid persecution. House churches like this one in an unidentified country meet weekly for several hours at a time. To avoid attracting too much attention, the groups often move from home to home, meeting in different locations each week. Still, many groups like this one have grown as curious neighbors are led to Christ. (IMB photo)

Indian city carries on with mixture of religions

It's 4:30 a.m. but night still lingers in Guwahati, capital of India's northeastern Assam province. A sleepy cow stands at the Fancy Bazaar intersection. Drizzle falls.

A loudspeaker at the nearby mosque breaks the drowsy silence, calling Muslims to the day's first prayer. The sleepy cadence stops. Another loudspeaker crackles nearby. This

time it's the Sikh temple with its own melodic chant, accompanied by a single drum.

The cow remains in the Fancy Bazaar intersection, nonplussed by the various invocations.

A few hours later, Tashin and her mother Iraki take local tea and cakes baked for Bihu, the Assamese (ah-suh-MEEZ) New Year celebration. The women live in a Muslim

neighborhood behind a white mosque. The area looks like any other in Guwahati except that topis — Muslim prayer hats — crown elderly men and pedestrians lack Hindu forehead markings.

"This may be a Hindu holy festival, but we celebrate anyway," Tashin says of Bihu. "We [Muslims and Hindus] live together well. You could say

there is no difference; you could say we are all the same here." Tashin and her family also celebrate Christmas, calling it "Big Day", as well as Muslim holidays like Ramadan.

Multiple faiths, languages and ethnicities color Assam. Islam is just one of the hues.

Some urban Muslims and clerics study their faith and hold a tight theological line. Rank-and-file Muslims, however, are Muslim in name only. "I haven't spoken to a single Muslim in 10 villages who has ever read the Quran in their own language," says a Baptist worker in the region.

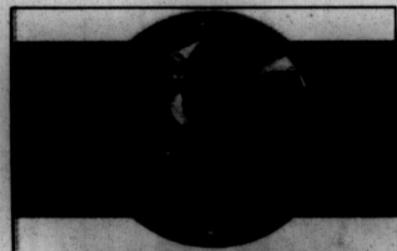
Among Assamese Muslims, lukewarm religion breeds a benign receptivity. The few Christians engaging Muslims find they readily listen to the Gospel but hesitate to wrestle with its meaning.

"The Assamese are a soft people. Hinduism here is not hardline Hindu and the Muslims here are adaptable, open to making new friendships, listening to new ideas," says an Assamese Christian leader.

"They're almost Hindu, with a very universalistic mindset. You have your way and we have ours," explains a Baptist worker. "It creates no desire to know the truth. If all you need to do is be a good man, then what's the point?"



NO SMILE — In a small Muslim village, a young Indian bride hosts visitors all day before her midnight wedding. Workers hired by her parents have built a large, colorful tent where she sits dressed in a fine sari and jewelry. When wedding guests offer gifts, she responds by sharing candy and mints. Because she will leave her family soon, custom dictates that the bride neither smile nor appear happy as she greets her guests. (IMB photo)



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Pride hinders work in Indonesia province

A curtain of rain billows over the mountain in angry gray waves, descending on the coastal Lampungese (lahm-poong-eez) village. Ignoring the imminent deluge, the villagers work on to raise a house's wooden frame. Precariously stacked rocks serve as

the wandering surfer lusting for the perfect waves to the international five-star hotelier coveting the next great resort location. All along the coastline, black-sand beaches emerge from rainforest foliage, washed by rolling surf whipped up by decks of coral.

All other work in the village is at a standstill for the moment—pending the completion of the new house. Communal projects are one of the defining characteristics of the Lampungese people. "It helps the village be strong," notes the king.

In the same vein, many distinct Lampungese attributes are what make them so difficult to reach with the Gospel, says Calvin Walters (not his real name), a missiologist committed to seeing a movement of God among this unreached people group.

Lampungese are a fierce and admittedly proud people, Walters explains. "Guarding your honor—personal, family, tribal—at all costs is paramount."

As little as 30 years ago, at the height of the clove industry, the Lampungese were among the wealthiest people in Sumatra. Lampungese men tell stories of rolling their own clove cigarettes using banknotes.

Today, the pride remains, but poverty paints the people. Out of Indonesia's 26 provinces, Lampung ranks 24th in education and is by far the poorest province on Sumatra, Walters says. Sixty percent of Lampungese villages have no electricity or running water.

Most Lampungese still live in small coastal or mountainous villages, living off the land farming cloves, coffee, pepper, and the resin of dammar trees—sold in use in chemical and cosmetic industries.

Prosperity is still available but rarely realized—"a facade of greatness" outweighs sensible spending and living. A Lampungese farmer with a small grove of dammar trees could earn enough to live a comfortable life in the city and send his children to school, but, "it's all spent," says a tree farmer, living in a one-room, dirt-floored shack in the forest.

"We have to pay for so much," the farmer says, shrugging. Social protocol requires each Lampungese to attend weddings and frequent parties—and to bring lavish gifts. Mediocre giving is shameful.

"Lampungese say: 'It is better to die than to lose face,'" explains an Indonesian Christian who lives among the Lampungese. "They are so proud, but so blinded by their apathy and poverty."

Once the largest ethnic group in Lampung Province, the 2 million Lampungese are now outnumbered by Javanese transplanted from other parts of Indonesia by the central government's migration policy.

This territorial infringement has bred deep-seated resentment and increased Lampungese solidarity and mistrust of outsiders.

Many researchers say the loyalty and tight knit Lampungese communities stem from their claim to be orthodox Muslims. Walters disagrees.

"They may say they are 99.9% Muslim, but they are 'high-identity' Muslims," Walters says. "They say 'I am Lampungese so I'm Muslim,' but they don't know really what it means [to be a Muslim] beyond fasting, praying and covering their women."

What defines and binds the Lampungese is animism and fear—fear of death, the spirit world, superstition, the future, and fear of bucking their age-old cultural traditions.

"If a Lampungese has a problem, they go to the 'dukun' (witchdoctor), not to the imam at the mosque," Walters says, "and no self-respecting Lampungese parent would let their child go out without a protective amulet."

In Lampungese homes, Walters points out rocks and figures over doorways, which "have no other function than to ward off evil spirits. It's all around," he says, adding that the Lampungese draw a distinction between black and white magic—"the difference between putting curses on someone or getting a good wife."

Effectively reaching the Lampungese will require a groundswell of local, indigenous believers—a daunting task, considering the fear that permeates the Lampungese themselves. To date, there are fewer than 20 known Lampungese Christians—most of whom live in fear of reprisal from the strong Muslim community.



PROUD PEOPLE — As men from the community help a neighbor build his home, women cook for the group. In addition to harvesting sap, Lampungese in this village earn their living by growing crops like coffee, cloves, sugar, pepper, and fruit in the hills nearby. (IMB photo)

piers as the men balance barefoot atop beams becoming slick from the first drizzles of rain. Working together, they push a section cockeyed to achieve desired alignment. It must be a house for someone significant—it will sit next to the home of the king.

"We've been here for eight generations," says the king, sipping stout homegrown coffee in his dim living room next door to the construction. "It is a good life."

The village probably hasn't changed much in several hundred years, except for the loud diesel "chug-chug-chug" coming from a shed at the edge of the village. Pounding rice from the village's fields into rice flour using a machine is as automated as this village gets.

Many Lampungese have had little or no exposure to the modern world and live minimally in locations whose natural grandeur would mesmerize anyone—from

Lottie Moon Offering: questions and answers

Why give through Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO)?

The International Mission Board (IMB) uses 100% of LMCO funds to support your missionaries and their ministries, allowing your church to join in a strategic global effort to reach the whole world. Gifts to the Cooperative Program are used for administrative expenses and other items.

The International Mission Board relies on the Lottie Moon offering for 50% of its annual income.

How can I trust how LMCO funds are spent?

IMB ministry is based on strategic planning and strong accountability. Southern Baptist individuals give their entire lives to strategize how best to get the Gospel to all

people groups. They live among people groups, speak their languages and understand their worldviews.

How is the LMCO goal set?
After considering IMB leadership's recommendation, the Woman's Missionary Union auxiliary of the Southern Baptist Convention sets the LMCO goal at its annual meeting.

How often do Southern Baptists reach the LMCO national goal?

Only once since 1981 have Southern Baptists reached the LMCO goal. With recent stock market downturns, investment income no longer makes up for not reaching the LMCO goal. The result is unfunded ministry requests, capital expenditures and operating expenses—and limiting long- and short-term missionary numbers.

If we don't reach the \$133 million LMCO goal, what will happen?

The IMB will continue limiting the flow of missionaries to the field. Missionary requests will remain empty without available funds to support workers.

What are the anticipated long-term effects of budget shortfalls?

When budget shortfalls are eased, short-term missionary numbers probably will recover quickly. Long-term missionary numbers may rise more slowly because many long-term workers first serve two- or three-year terms. Because budget shortfalls have limited short-term workers, fewer will be ready to feed the long-term missionary force.

If we reach the \$133 million LMCO goal, what will happen?

Reaching the National Goal will allow the International Mission Board to continue supporting missionaries and ministries according to the budget set for 2004.

What is the Challenge Goal?

The Challenge Goal embraces a "What will it take to reach a lost world?" attitude—hurrying the chance for unreached peoples to know Christ.

If we reach the \$150 million LMCO Challenge Goal, what will happen?

Reaching the Challenge Goal will allow the IMB to open the floodgates and send many of the record numbers of Southern Baptists who are called by God and ready to serve on the field but, as of now, do not have funds available to support them.

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every know Jesus
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NAMES IN THE NEWS



Jerry Lowery and Chad Jeter

Glenfield Church, New Albany, ordained **Chad Jeter** as a deacon on August 17. Jeter and his wife, Amy, are active in the Youth and Children's Programs. Pictured (from left)

are Jerry W. Lowery, pastor, and Jeter.

First Church, Runnelstown, ordained **John (Hal) Hood** to the ministry November 2. Bob



Ken White, pastor and Don Schuman

Goolsby, AMD for Perry Association, gave the charge to the church and Henry Freeman, pastor, gave the charge to the candidate. Pictured (from left) are Holly and Hal Hood, and Freeman.

as Minister of Youth. Pictured (from left) are Melanie Davis, Davis, and Dale Eakes, pastor.

Louin Church, Louin, recently ordained **Matt Davis** into the ministry. Davis presently serves

Beulah Church, Myrtle, licensed **Don Schuman** to preach on November 3. Schuman is available for pulpit supply and can be reached at (662) 534-8687. Pictured (from left) are Ken White, pastor, and Schuman.



Meanie & Matt Davis and Dale Eakes, pastor

COLLEGE & SEMINARY NEWS

The William Carey College Theatre Department and the Winters School of Music will present Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day on December 12 at 7 p.m. and December 13 at 10:30 a.m. in the Saenger Theatre, Hattiesburg. The production is co-sponsored by the Hattiesburg Arts Council. Bancorp South serves as corpo-

rate sponsor. The production is entirely student-designed. Admission is \$5. Tickets can be purchased by calling (601) 318-6221 December 1-13. The box office is open daily from 1-4 p.m. Seats may also be available at the door. For information on school group performances on December 10 and 11, please call (601) 583-6005.



Holly & Hal Hood and Henry Freeman, pastor

HOMECOMINGS & REVIVALS

Pleasant Hill, Columbus: December 7; Jesus Christ is the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever; 150th anniversary; Sunday School, 9 a.m.; worship, 10 a.m.; lunch, 11:30 a.m.; afternoon worship, 1:30 p.m.; Jim Futral, MBCB, executive director,

will present a certificate of commendation from the Mississippi Baptist Historic Commission; former pastors and ministers of music will participate; a video has been prepared; all former members and friends are invited to attend.

YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (*I have sinned.*)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (*I repent.*)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (*I believe in Jesus.*)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with him. (*I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.*)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name (John 1:12).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

MAIN STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, Goodman, Miss is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send letters and/or resumes to Pastor search committee, P.O. Box 206, Goodman, MS 39079. Or email resumes to tarjir2@aol.com.

STEEPHOLLOW BAPTIST CHURCH, Poplarville, Miss., is a mid-sized church seeking part-time (potential full-time) minister of music. Two Sunday morning services plus Wednesday night services. Must lead adult choir. Please call (601) 795-4638 or fax resume (601) 795-4696.

ORGANIST, CASTLEWOODS Baptist Church. Send a letter of interest or resume to 175 Stonecastle Drive, Brandon, MS 39047 via mail or fax. Fax (601) 992-2623. For information call (601) 992-9977.

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MINISTER OF STUDENTS POSITION, part-time/full-time. Send resumes to Grace Memorial Baptist Church, 2412 23rd Avenue, Gulfport, MS 39501.

FULL-TIME MINISTER OF MUSIC/Education position available. Send resume to psprine@yahoo.com or mail to Rawls Springs Baptist Church, 55 Rawls Springs Road, Hattiesburg, MS 39402. Attention: personnel committee.

ROCK HILL BAPTIST CHURCH, MT. Olive, Miss., is currently accepting resumes for the position of youth minister. If interested, please send resume to Rock Hill Baptist Church, 518 Rock Hill Road, Mt. Olive, MS 39119, attn: youth search committee.

PART-TIME MINISTER TO STUDENTS - Hickory Grove Baptist Church (Lamar county) is looking for a part-time student minister to work with grades 7-12. Work requirements are Wednesdays and weekends. Send resume to Terrel Fortenberry (youth committee) at 217 Gates Bridge Road, Sumrall, MS 39482. Or call (601) 758-4101 after 6 p.m.

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of Your Presence
in Heaven!



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Calvary Church, Pascagoula, began their mission emphasis for Lottie Moon. Hal Lee, missionary to France, and Bob Storie, chaplain for Singing River Hospital, spoke on November 30. The WOM presented Empty Shoes and Morley Mason (pictured) preached on December 3.

The Singing Mississippians will have a gospel singing at Concord Church, Bogue Chitto, on November 30 at 6 p.m. Refreshments will follow.



Monument Drive Church Baby Dedication, Tupelo

Parkway Church, Clinton, will present an outdoor driving tour, The Greatest Gift, December 10-14 from 6:30-9 p.m. Admission is free. This presentation drew 3,200 cars last year. For more information, call (601) 924-9373.

Mason

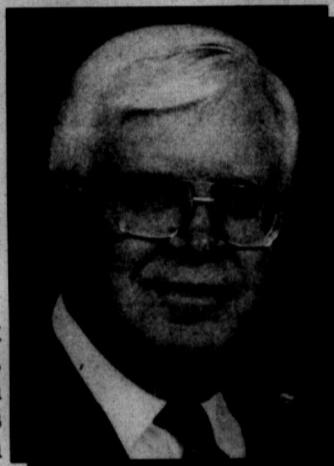
Monument Drive Church, Tupelo, recently held a baby dedication. Pictured (from left) are Becky Sinner with Grace, Joe and Jennifer Price with Wesley, Jay and Verita Marshall with Lauren, and Tommy Tackett, pastor.



Rogers, Grant McLain, pastor; and Hilbun

Parkway Church, Houston,

Charles W. Gordon, DD, was honored by Jones County Association on the occasion of his retirement. Gordon has served as Director of Education and Outreach for Jones County. He previously served Choctaw and Webster Counties as Director of Missions. He was presented with a plaque, DVD/VCR player, and a monetary gift on November 16.



Gordon

Rocky Creek Church, Lucedale, licensed Rob Hilbun and Brandon Rogers to the ministry on September 28. Pictured (from left) are Rogers, Grant McLain, pastor, and Hilbun.



Ken Regan and Marty Raybon



Parkway Church Deacon Ordination, Houston

Marty Raybon, former lead singer of Shenandoah, led revival services at Heritage Heights Church, Laurel, recently. Raybon recounted his own experience of giving his life to Jesus. Pictured (from left) are Ken Regan, pastor, and Raybon.

Annuity Board seeking name change to 'GuideStone'

DALLAS (BP) — Resolutions to amend the Annuity Board's charter and the charters of its affiliates were approved by trustees of the Southern Baptist Convention entity during their early November meeting in Dallas.

Board President O.S. Hawkins expressed appreciation to trustees for what he described as their faithful support and foresight in working with the SBC Executive Committee to change the name of the Annuity Board to GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and to expand its markets.

"The name change for the Annuity Board and the opportunity to expand our markets, which will be voted on by the Southern Baptist Convention in June of 2004, will further undergird our efforts to enhance the

financial security of the pastor at the crossroads and other Southern Baptist employees we serve," Hawkins told trustees.

Trustees approved resolutions to change the names and amend the charters of the Annuity Board and its affiliates following the SBC Executive Committee's unanimous vote last September concurring with the board's proposed name change and ministry assignment enhancements. The name change will require two successive annual votes of the convention to change the SBC bylaws, beginning next June in Indianapolis.

The recommendation from the Executive Committee includes a provision to allow the Annuity Board to begin using its new name after the first vote of the convention.

The ministry assignment enhancements will allow the

Annuity Board to make its products and services available to other evangelical ministry organizations. Officials said the initiative will increase the board's investment asset base and expand the base for its medical plans. Southern Baptist pastors and other employees will benefit from the board's enhanced ability to provide competitive retirement and investment products and services, officials said. Additionally, the board will gain greater buying power related to risk management products and services, including medical plans.

Legal documents will require that the majority of participants served by the Annuity Board be Southern Baptists, and all Annuity Board trustees must be members of Southern Baptist churches and elected by the

Southern Baptist Convention in the same manner they have been elected since the board's founding in 1918. The revised charters will be reviewed by the SBC Executive Committee in February and then presented at the SBC annual meeting.

Chairman George Tous van Nijkerk told fellow trustees, "Our current name is no longer reflective of our organization and a new name gives us the opportunity to communicate our image as an up-to-date, full-service provider of financial and insurance products and services."

In other action, trustees approved a 2004 budget of \$53 million, a .2 percent decrease in spending and operations from 2003. The Annuity Board receives no Cooperative Program funds for operations, but pays all expenses from an advisory fee on the investment

funds available to participants. All Cooperative Program money received by the board is paid as financial assistance to needy retired ministers or denominational workers or their widows.

John R. Jones, the board's chief operating officer, reviewed the process used to develop the 2004 budget.

"During the last four years, we have been able to reduce the Annuity Board workforce by 55 positions," Jones reported. "This reduction has been accomplished through attrition by re-evaluating and restructuring vacated positions."

"Additionally, the Annuity Board has consistently looked for opportunities to gain intentional operating efficiencies and aggressively manage costs," he said.

The trustees' next scheduled meeting will be March 1-2, 2004, in Dallas.

LED ASTRAY

Editor:

First, I want to thank you for writing in The Baptist Record about all the research and the fine upstanding articles Justin Peters wrote about these false preachers and teachers. I am 69 years old. I have been called to be a deacon and teacher of adults at Bartahatchie Church, Bartahatchie.

For years I have been telling my Sunday School class about these false prophets and so-called preachers and teachers on TV. It is sad when so many are being led astray by them.

I thank Peters for the stand he is taking against all evil preaching and teaching on TV. I have taken this same stand for many years. There was never any doubt about these false prophets, so called by our Lord Jesus. Any smart Christian knows the Bible teaches all healing comes from God. No man has the power to heal anyone, unless given to him by God, and nowhere does God's Word state that someone can heal anyone by slapping them down.

On another subject, God says it better than we ever could in Leviticus 18:22-29 - man is not to lie down with man but only with woman, with no exceptions. God made man and put him in charge to be a good steward over all His creation. He values human life above everything on earth, and so must we or we will experience the wrath of God.

May God help us all to carry out, to the very best of our ability, His commandments.

H.D. Holt
Greenwood Springs

ABOUT TIME

Editor:

I am writing in regard to the recent series of articles by Justin Peters on the Word of Faith movement. It is about time that someone made a public stand within our state convention on the issue of false prophets today. For a person who studies the Word of God, it should be fairly easy to see the perpetual deceit and manipulation evident in the Word of Faith movement.

If following these people will make you healthy and wealthy, why are so many of their viewers and contributors still ailing and poor? It seems we should see healthy and wealthy Christians every where we turn. What we see, instead, are people who are convinced they have little or no faith, since God has not given them abundant wealth, and constant health.

The Word of Faith movement has, unfortunately, led many astray. Many thanks to Peters for taking the bold stand he has on this issue, and sharing it in the love of Christ. Thanks also to The Baptist Record for printing these articles, and thereby standing on this issue, as well.

As a pastor who desires to protect my portion of the flock from wolves as best I can, I am grateful.

Brett Campbell, pastor
Mars Hill Church, Summit

PREACHING HERESY

Editor:

I would like to thank you for printing the series of articles by Justin Peters on the Word of Faith (WOF) movement. Few people are willing to write on the subject due to the movement's popularity and prosperity. So often people accept the movement based on their own experience with it. Human experience cannot always be trusted. The Bible teaches us that Scriptures are always to be placed above experience (2 Peter 1:16-21).

Peters presents the truth, carefully researched and documented. He has also drawn from his personal experience with WOF, making prudent points and sharing them with us without being malicious. The Bible warns believers "not to be deceived by any means" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3). It also warns that some will come in the name of Christ preaching heresy and deceiving many. People are too often caught up in the emotionalism and charismatic appeal of the movement to stop and think things through. Paul warned Timothy that the day would come when some would not be able to "endure sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3).

I know Justin personally. He is truly a kind and loving servant of Christ. He does not write to condemn, or to unnecessarily criticize, but rather to inform and encourage believers to be wise and alert in a day of great deception. If you would like to learn more, I urge you to contact Justin at First Church, Vicksburg.

Thank you again for your boldness and prudence in presenting this series on the WOF movement.

Dwight Sibley, pastor
Calvary Church, Vicksburg

Editor's note: Peters is interim minister of education at First Church, Vicksburg. He can be reached at P.O. Box 930, Vicksburg, MS 39181. Telephone: (601) 636-2493. His e-mail address is jpeters@fbcvicksburg.org.

Peters' four-part series on the Word of Faith movement can be downloaded at www.mbc.org. Click on "mbc departments" in the menu bar and select The Baptist Record. Click on "Analysis: False Prophets."



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

Mass. ruling criticized for avoiding issues

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A 15-page majority opinion by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Nov. 18 avoided several issues that conservatives say should be confronted before the nation embraces same-sex "marriage."

They point to research showing that homosexual relationships -- particularly those involving homosexual men -- are short-term and rarely monogamous. Such relationships, they say, lead to unhealthy behavior, which in turn produces a spread in sexually transmitted diseases.

Just this year the Centers for Disease Control announced that HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) and syphilis rates among homosexual men are up -- despite the fact that the "safe sex" message has been promoted in America for nearly two decades. HIV is the precursor to full-blown AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

"People need to see that what we're condoning and what we're legalizing now has problems from the very onset," Mike Haley, a former homosexual who now works for Focus on the Family, told Baptist Press (BP).

Tim Wilkins, another former homosexual who heads Cross Ministry, Inc., agreed. "Even men and women who are homosexual and have been involved in homosexuality for years have told me frankly that they know of few if any long-term relationships -- male or female," he told BP.

Conservatives say the brevity of homosexual relationships and lack of monogamy with them matters because the institution of marriage is already in trouble. The brevity of those relationships would change society greatly and would add to an already abysmal divorce rate, which in turn would negatively impact the children they raise.



Wilkins

Evangelicals agree with those arguments but say the problem runs much deeper. Homosexual relationships, they say, run counter to God's plan for mankind. Writing in a Crosswalk.com commentary Oct. 29, R. Albert Mohler Jr. of Southern Seminary said that marriage is the "culminating picture of creation's goodness."

If homosexuality is rebellion against God, evangelicals say, then it will never bring the contentment that the homosexual seeks. "Because of that void he is trying to fill it the wrong way and the only way he knows

to fill it is through sexual encounters," Wilkins said, "but after the sexual encounter is over, the emptiness is even larger. The sexual relationships simply exacerbate the very problem that [the] male homosexual is trying to alleviate."

A 1985 book by two homosexual men, David McWhirter and Andrew Mattison, seems to underscore the problem of same-sex relationships. The book, *The Male Couple: How Relationships Develop*, followed more than 150 homosexual men and found that 95% of them have "an arrangement whereby the partners may have sexual activity with others at some time under certain conditions." Their relationships lasted anywhere from one to 37 years.

With the debate over same-sex "marriage" intensifying, The New York Times ran a story in August showing that homosexuals in Canada are not rushing to tie the knot. The debate "pits those who celebrate a separate

and flamboyant way of life as part of a counterculture against those who long for acceptance into the mainstream," the story read.

The story followed two men in their 40s, David Andrew and David Warren, who have lived together for seven years.

Although the men promise to protect one another, the story says "they stop short of monogamy, which is something Mr. Andrew also says he does not believe in."

The level of promiscuity varies, although it seems to be the norm, author Timothy J. Dailey argues in his book *Dark Obsession*. He quotes a 1997 study of 2,583 older homosexual men published in the Journal of Sex Research that found the "modal range for number of sexual partners... was 101-500." Ten to 15% said they had had more than 1,000 sexual partners.

"The gay community is going to tell you that the reason that their relationships have problems is because society has not yet condemned them and doesn't give them the privileges that heterosexuals have," Haley said. "When we look at areas like San Francisco or the Netherlands, which are very gay affirmative areas, those numbers are even higher."

The level of promiscuity has been harmful to both the health and the mortality rate of homosexual men. A 1997 article published in the International Journal of Epidemiology found that in one Canadian urban area, the expected life span for a homosexual man at age 20 was eight to 20 years less than that for all men.



Haley

Rankin, trustees respond to Eitel accusations

LEXINGTON, Ky. (ABP and local reports) — In response to criticism from a seminary missions professor, the president and trustees of the International Mission Board (IMB) defended the agency's actions and insisted its mission will not be "compromised."

A paper written by Keith Eitel of Southeastern Seminary and mailed to IMB trustees by Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Seminary and Eitel's former boss while president of Southeastern Seminary, drew a strong response from IMB President Jerry Rankin.

Although Rankin and his critics all support the conservative movement that has risen to power in the Southern Baptist Convention, Rankin has found himself defending the IMB against charges it is not conservative enough.

In the paper, Eitel accuses Rankin and other IMB administrators of failing to be doctrinally stringent enough. He

specifically cites concerns about partnerships with other Great Commission Christian groups that require lesser doctrinal adherence and the role of women in missions leadership.

On the Southeastern Seminary web page, Eitel lists doctoral degrees from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill., and the University of South Africa in Pretoria, South Africa, but no studies at a Southern Baptist seminary. A spokesman for the International Mission Board also confirmed that Eitel has never served in any full-time missionary capacity with the board.

During a Nov. 10-12 meeting in Lexington, Ky., IMB trustees adopted two statements in response to the Eitel paper.

The first statement, which was adopted without discussion or dissent, affirmed "the

strategies and leadership" of the board and resolved "to review the concerns and the issues raised and take appropriate action to guarantee that the vision to lead Southern Baptists to reach the world for Christ is not compromised."

The second statement, also adopted unanimously, affirmed an initiative by Rankin to arrange for a meeting of IMB staff and trustees with Eitel and Patterson "to resolve misunderstandings and perceptions communicated in Eitel's assessment of the International Mission Board vision and strategy."

Rankin said he would write Patterson "to seek an explanation as to why he would cast aspersions on our board relative to the conservative resurgence." Trustees of the IMB are "God-fearing, Bible-believing men and women, products of the conservative resurgence within our convention,"

Rankin declared. Yet, "our staunch embracing of and adherence to the Baptist Faith and Message is not considered adequate from your perspective."

A letter from Rankin to Eitel countered the criticisms as "unfounded" and questioned why they were circulated without first coming to the board's leadership for a response.

Rankin acknowledged in the letter, however, that he was pleased finally to learn "the source of rumors that have plagued the IMB in recent years."

He said "myths" about the IMB have been perpetuated by the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Mainstream Baptists, Texas Baptist dissident David Currie, and employees of Southeastern Seminary.

"I had wondered why so much criticism of our program and policies, disrespect of leadership and even threatened litigation

was being generated by students from Southeastern," Rankin told Eitel. Another memo written by Eitel to an IMB staff member "clearly indicates that they were being programmed to hear certain distortions out of context and encouraged to engage in a subversive response."

Eitel's criticisms have endangered collaborative efforts between Southeastern Seminary and the IMB, Rankin said. "It is hard to see how we can continue such a partnership when disrespect for leadership and policies is being nurtured, non-biblical subversive behavior is encouraged and blatant disregard for truth is propagated."

In the seven-page letter, Rankin countered point-by-point each of Eitel's criticisms.

He denied the IMB is placing less emphasis on theological training for mission workers, as Eitel suggested. He insisted on the importance of using short-term volunteers in contemporary missions work. He defended the training techniques and staff of the Missionary Learning Center, and he defended partnerships with other Great Commission Christians as a paradigm shift "that has been blessed of God to enhance unprecedented impact on a lost world."

"The reality is that many of these Great Commission Christians are far more conservative in their doctrine than Southern Baptists have been and would not have accepted us into partnership with them until recent years."

Rankin also defended the role of women in mission leadership.

"We fully recognize the biblical limitation of women holding a church office, such as pastor, that clearly represents spiritual authority in a local congregation," Rankin said. "However, to extrapolate that limited application to deny women the freedom to practice their giftedness and calling as a part of a team seeking to reach a segment of the lost world goes beyond biblical teaching."



Eitel



Patterson



Rankin

Bibliocipher

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NRV IAVSHX SH XAW

WOT RN XAW BEP NRV

VSKAXWRDHOWHH XR

WZVVJ ROW XAEX

GWBSWZWXA.

VRUEOH XWO: NRDV

Clue: H = S

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Galatians 4:4

Pastors sought for homosexual marriage fight

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A national Christian organization is seeking to mobilize 50,000 pastors against same-sex marriage and has set up a website for the effort.

ChurchCoalition.com, a website of the American Family Association in Tupelo, was launched in late October with the goal of lining up thousands of pastors across the country to defend the traditional definition of marriage. The website promises occasional e-mail updates about various pro-family issues, including same-sex marriage, and additionally promises that subscribers won't be spammed. The campaign is not officially associated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Our goal is to secure 50,000 pastors who will take a stand for the Biblical concept of marriage by signing this Pledge," a statement on the

website reads. "...Only by letting our combined voices be heard can we hope to protect the sacred institution of marriage as being between one man and one woman."

Tom Elliff, an Oklahoma pastor who chairs the Southern Baptist Convention's Council on Family Life, said he likes the idea.

"This is one more opportunity for pastors to speak out in defense of marriage," said Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., and a former two-term president of the Southern Baptist Convention. "I pray that we will use every such credible avenue available to make known our position on this crucial issue."

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville, said he has been pointing people to

the website. The ERLC is part of a coalition of more than 20 likeminded organizations that have joined together in support of a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. Known as the "Arlington Group," it includes such organizations as the Family Research Council and Focus on the Family.

"The pastors are the keys to the churches," Land said. "They're the shepherds. We are depending on them to rouse their flocks to the danger that our courts may attempt to force a redefinition of God's holy institution of marriage, which is the basic building block of human society. The only way to stop that from happening is to amend the Constitution to prohibit them from doing so."

The four-sentence pledge reads: "I oppose 'homosexual marriage.' I believe that marriage should be between one

man and one woman only. In addition, I oppose giving the benefits of marriage to civil unions between members of the same sex. I pledge to defend the Biblical concept of marriage as between one man and one woman only."

An amendment that would ban same-sex marriage has been introduced in the House of Representatives and has roughly 100 co-sponsors. Labeled the Federal Marriage Amendment, it has yet to be introduced in the Senate. Some conservatives want it strengthened so that it will also ban Vermont-type civil unions that give same-sex couples most of the benefits of marriage without the name.

Four polls released this year show that anywhere from 54-58% percent of Americans support an amendment banning same-sex marriage.

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Being Changed by the Gospel

Acts 22:1-16

By Jon Daniels

How has the Gospel changed your life? What difference has Jesus Christ made in your life? Our words, actions, lifestyles, choices - everything in our lives should give clear evidence of the change that has come to our lives because of Jesus. As the hymnwriter said, "What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought, Since Jesus came into my heart!"

At the moment of our salvation, we were justified in God's sight, declared righteous in His sight because of the righteousness of Christ being credited to us. At the present time, we are being sanctified, growing in practical righteousness and holiness as we become more and more like Christ. One day, we will be glorified when our

sanctification is complete and we are in our eternal home in heaven. While the change that the Gospel brings to our lives is instantaneous and complete at the moment we surrender our lives to Christ as Lord, it is also a lifelong process during which we grow in Christ likeness.

Paul was changed by the Gospel in a radical way. His life's purpose was changed. His career was changed. His passions were changed. Even his name was changed!

PAUL'S PREVIOUS LIFE - v. 1-5

In most evangelism training courses, participants are trained to share their personal testimony. The first point is usually, "My life before I met Christ." The person then shares with the lost person what their life was like before



Daniels

Christ changed their lives through the power of the Gospel.

In these first five verses, Paul does that. After nearly being killed by rioters (21:30-36), he asked the commander of the Romans troops for the opportunity to speak to the crowd. What an incredible display of godly courage!

Paul hoped that his fellow Jews would at last be persuaded that Jesus was the Messiah, and that he, Paul, was simply carrying out his divine orders. He began his speech to them by identifying with them as a Jew. Paul was educated under the esteemed Gamaliel, reared in the most orthodox manner, and had vigorously persecuted the Way when it appeared to be a threat to the ancient religion.

We all have a "former" life that is an important part of our testimony. Isn't it wonderful to know that we have been saved in spite of our life before Christ?

PAUL'S POWERFUL ENCOUNTER - v. 6-11

Luke first recorded Paul's conversion experience in Acts 9, and Paul would repeat it again to Felix and Agrippa in Acts 26. Imagine Paul's amazement as a murderous religious leader when he found out in a very "in your face" way that Jesus Christ was alive! In that very instant, he had to change his way of thinking, his way of life, and let Jesus Christ have complete control of all his life. This was a personal encounter with the risen Lord who had a specific word and a specific plan for Paul. His repentance and obedience were required for him to participate in those plans.

Most of us have not had "Damascus Road" conversion experiences. When I was saved as a nine year-old boy at a Bill Glass crusade at Delta State University, I was not blinded by a bright light nor did I fall to the ground. But the encounter that I had with the risen Lord that night in March of 1973 was just as real, just as powerful, and just as life-changing. My repentance and obedience was required that night, and my life was forever changed.

PAUL'S PURPOSE FULFILLED - v. 12-16

Paul's obedience to the Lord's choice of him led him to be baptized, symbolizing the forgiveness and cleansing of his sins. This was then followed by a life of obedient service as a "witness to all men of what you have seen and heard" (v. 15). Paul's lived a "purpose-driven life" in which he faithfully proclaimed the Gospel wherever he went to whoever would listen.

In the book, *The Kingdom-Focused Church*, Dr. Gene Mims states that it is God's will that we witness to the lost folks around us. "[God] has placed you in their lives for this purpose, and your Christian life will never be complete until you understand this and actively become a witness to the lost" (p. 70). Our obedience to the Gospel is what brought change to our lives, and our obedience to the Gospel is what will allow others to hear it and be obedient as well.

Daniels is pastor of Monticello Church, Monticello.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Responsibilities

Colossians 3:18-4:9

By Laura Russell

We have many roles in today's world. These roles include being spouses, parents, workers, employers, supervisors, church members and church leaders. In all our roles, we as Christians have responsibilities to fulfill because of our relationship with God. God commands believers to fulfill their Christian responsibilities toward those with whom they interact at home, work or elsewhere. In these verses, Paul gives us concrete advice about Christian living.

CHRISTIANS IN THE HOME (3:18-21).

Paul believed that there was an order for the family. He believed this order was God-given. In this order, the husband functions as the head of the family. Women were to be subject to their husbands. In this order, the

husband is to love his wife and not "be harsh" with her. Christian marriage involves mutual submission, subordinating our personal desires for the good of the loved one and submitting ourselves to Christ as Lord. Next in the order were children. Paul says that children are responsible for obeying their parents. Children must be handled with care. Fathers are not to misuse and abuse their parental authority. Authority is not to be expressed in an arbitrary or undisciplined way that will cause children to become frustrated and discouraged. With each of these family members, there is mutual responsibility to submit and love, to obey and encourage, to work hard and be fair.

CHRISTIANS ON THE JOB (3:22-4:1).

These verses set forth some guiding principles for working



Russell

people. The Christian worker can dignify the working place through honest, sincere work which he offers up as a testimony to his Lord. Again, here is a mutual responsibility to employees and employers. Employees are to work hard for their employers and employers are to be just and fair with their employees. While divisions will always be between people, Paul explains that Christ transcends all these divisions. Since the creation, God has given us work to do. If we could regard work as an act of worship or service to God, our attitude would take some of the drudgery and boredom out of it. We could work without complaining or resentment if we would treat our job problems as the cost of discipleship. In *The Message*, Romans 12:1-2 puts it this way: "So here's what you do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God

does for you is the best thing you can do for Him."

CHRISTIANS IN THEIR CHURCHES (4:2-4 AND 7-9).

Prayer is a basic expression of the Christian faith. We have the responsibility to pray with steadfastness, alertness and thanksgiving. Prayer is a constant part of a Christian's life. Paul is in prison, but he does not ask for anything for himself. His basic concern is for the gospel. He asked that the Colossians pray for two things—that he have an opportunity to proclaim the gospel and that he take advantage when the opportunity came. Paul's life was focused on telling others about Christ explaining and preaching the wonderful mystery of Christ. He wanted the Colossians to have some responsibility in his sharing of the gospel and they did this by praying for him. Tychicus and Onesimus were to tell the Colossians about Paul, not to get pity—but the opposite. Their purpose was to encourage the Colossians' hearts. Our responsibility toward one another is to be characterized by prayerful concern and grace, encouragement and reassurance.

CHRISTIANS IN THE WORLD (4:5-6).

We should be wise in our contacts with non-Christians (outsiders) making the most of our chances to tell them the good news of salvation. Believers are not to draw apart from the world in a little exclusive clique. We have a responsibility to represent the gospel to those who have not accepted it. Our conduct is to be characterized by wisdom. When we tell others about Christ, it is important always to be gracious in what we say. We will lose our effectiveness if we are not courteous. We must respect others if we want them to listen to what we have to say.

Christ loves us beyond measure, and we are called to respond to His love. Paul had a deep concern that the love of the Savior be extended to those both outside and inside the church. Because we have received the love of Jesus, we are called to share this overflowing love with everyone we meet. Yes, everyone!

Russell is member of First Church, McComb.

LifeWay begins Christian music downloads

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — It just got easier for Christian music fans to download their favorite songs to their computers — legally. LifeWay Christian Stores, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, has launched its

new digital music downloading service, offering single songs via the World Wide Web for 99 cents and complete albums for \$10-\$12.

The service, made possible through a partnership with online music pioneer Liquid Digital Media (for-

merly Liquid Audio), is the first of its kind available through a Christian retailer.

Christian artists tobyMac, founding member of dc Talk and founder/co-owner/CEO of Gotee Records, and singer-songwriter Shaun Groves joined with Gospel Music Association President John Styll and representatives from Chordant Distribution Group and Liquid Digital Media to announce the downloading service at a Nov. 18 news conference at LifeWay Christian Stores' headquarters in Nashville.

"LifeWay is seeking to bridge the illegal-downloads divide by providing people with an easy, affordable and legal way to download their favorite Christian artists," said Mark King, vice president of direct marketing for LifeWay Christian Stores.

King noted that the partnership will allow visitors to the lifewaystores.com website a unique shopping experience where they can purchase items such as books and gifts and download music — all in one shopping cart.

LifeWay's new service requires no monthly subscription fee as other sites do, or special software to download. All songs are offered in Windows Media format. Once a customer pur-

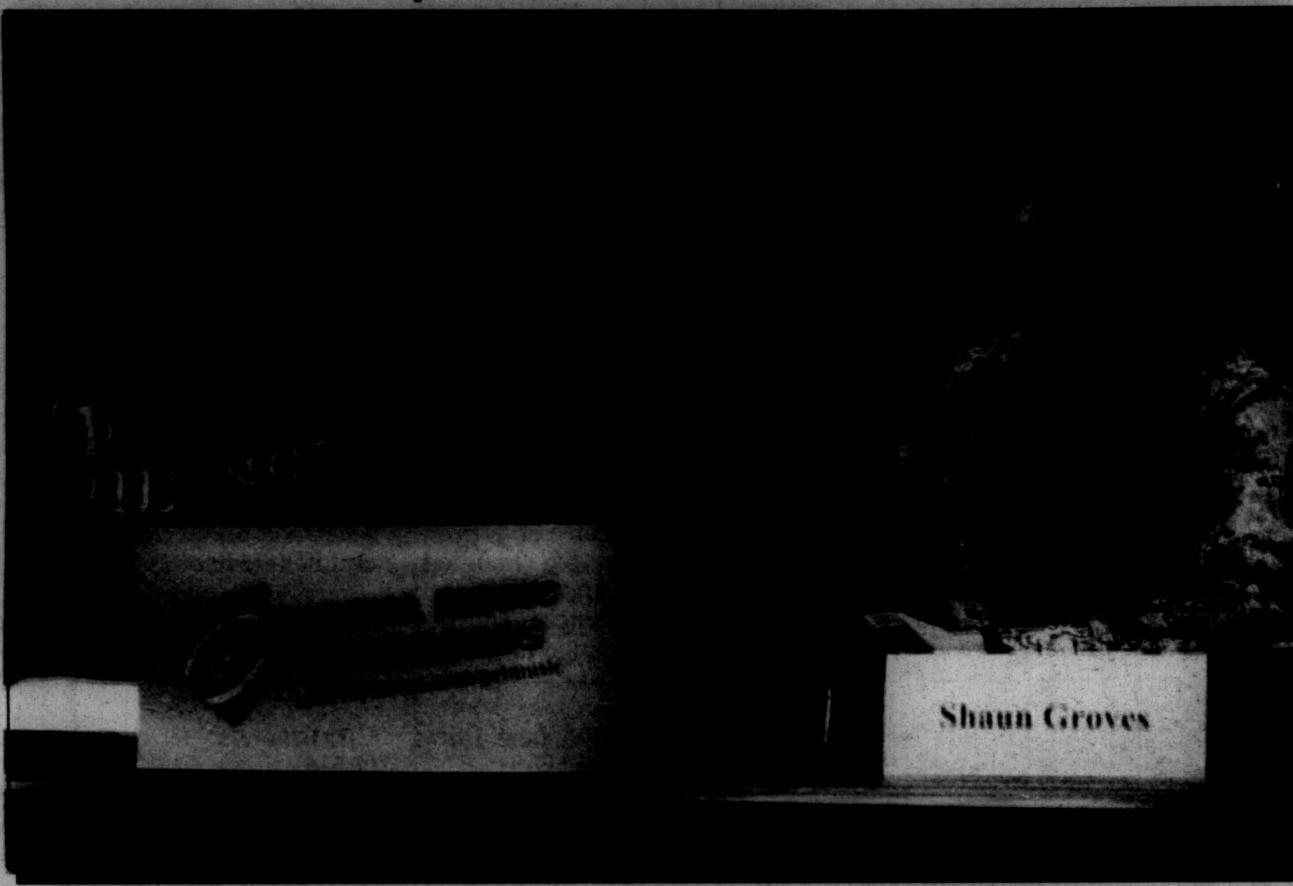
chases a song, the file can be downloaded to a PC with unlimited transfers to portable devices and CD-burner capabilities.

"People downloading songs without paying for them has been an industry-wide problem for years," Styll said.

"Illegal downloads have been a growing problem in the Christian community, and they are causing economic harm to everyone involved in the music industry," Styll said. "We applaud LifeWay for taking this leadership role in offering digital music downloads for purchase on the Internet, as it is a practical solution to this very real problem."

LifeWay also announced it would have a number of national promotions with Chordant Distribution Group, including a giveaway of one song each day for 30 days to everyone who visits the lifewaystores.com website. The promotion, called "30 for 30," begins Nov. 18. In addition, LifeWay will have several special promotions with Provident Music Distribution.

A delayed webcast of the news conference will be available Nov. 18 after 3 p.m. Central. To view the webcast, visit lifeway.com/news and click on Digital Music Download Press Conference.



Shaun Groves

DOWNLOAD SERVICE DEBUTED — Christian recording artists Toby Mac (left) and Shaun Groves respond to questions during a news conference in which LifeWay Christian Resources became the first Christian retail chain to provide a legal way to download digital music files. (BP photo by Kent Harville)

Scammers setting sights on Christian booksellers

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — The man on the phone told Cindy Stewart he wanted to order some Bibles for his seminary's library. Stewart, the assistant manager of the LifeWay Christian Store in Baltimore, Md., didn't think anything sounded unusual — at first.

"He told me he wanted genuine leather Bibles but didn't know what kind of Bibles he wanted," Stewart said of the phone call last August. "He said he just needed two of each kind and that it was very important they were genuine leather." She tried to help the man be more specific with his order.

"It was kind of frustrating because we have 700 different kinds of Bibles," Stewart

said, "but he insisted he didn't care what kind they were and told me just to pick out anything." Stewart became suspicious when the caller, talking with a thick foreign accent, demanded the Bibles be charged that same day to the credit card number he had given her. "He told me to just send him whatever, make sure it was two genuine leather Bibles each and it had to be under \$500," she said. "At that point I was pretty sure it was a scam. Anything over \$500 that's stolen is considered a felony."

It sounds like a whodunit right from the pages of Nancy Drew, but unfortunately for Christian booksellers, the story is real

— and potentially costly. Melissa Mitchell, director of loss prevention at LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention in Nashville, said the call Stewart received is an adaptation of a con known as the Nigerian scam because the thieves who have been caught all have been Nigerian nationals.

"Someone calls or e-mails a store and requests a large number of the same item, in this case Bibles, to be sent to an address somewhere in Nigeria," Mitchell explained. "They pay with a credit card, but the catch is the credit card they use is phys-

ically in the possession of the cardholder — it's the number that's been stolen."

By the time the merchant realizes the credit card purchase is fraudulent, the merchandise already has been shipped to an address that's impossible to track. Eventually the merchandise is sold through the Nigerian black market.

Mitchell began noticing early last spring a pattern of "charge-backs" — credit card purchases that are sent back to the store when a customer denies ordering the items. The common thread was a delivery address in Nigeria. She immediately shut down all overseas shipments through the bookstores and customers were asked to go through the online catalog store so Mitchell and the catalog store team could recognize anything suspicious.

After a few months of seeing no activity, the call to the Baltimore store alarmed Mitchell because the delivery address was U.S.-based. "We notified CBA [the Christian Booksellers Association] immediately because we knew if they were getting us, they were also getting independent booksellers," Mitchell said. She quickly learned her hunch had been right and independents and other Christian retail chains also had been hit.

The biggest victims are the Christian booksellers in Nigeria, Mitchell noted. "The Bibles that are supplied on the black market are the reason for the sharp price undercutting you find in Nigeria," Justice Okoronkwo, administrative secretary for the CBA in Nigeria, reported in an e-mail to Mitchell. "Genuine importers often cannot sell as they cannot afford to undersell. Sometimes they eventually have to sell below the cost price because they have deadlines to meet from international suppliers. This is a real problem for the CBA Nigeria."

FAST FACTS: S

• In 2002, Southern Baptist Convention members spent \$1.5 billion on Bibles.

• In 2002, the average price of a Bible was \$15.90.

• In 2002, the average price of a book was \$10.90.

• In 2002, the average price of a CD was \$10.90.

• In 2002, the average price of a cassette tape was \$10.90.

• In 2002, the average price of a book was \$10.90.

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